

Paper Devoted to Assassinations

GRASSY KNOLL GAZETTE PRINTS DATA ON DEATHS OF KENNEDYS, KING

RICHMOND (AP) — Author Norman Mailer subscribes. So do Washington lawyer Bernard Fensterwald and Texas newspaper editor Penn Jones Jr. And so do a half-dozen people in Australia and Great Britain.

That listing is a source of enormous pride to James W. "Billy" Burke Jr., publisher and editor of what may be Richmond's smallest and least-known publication — The Grassy Knoll Gazette.

"I've never advertised. Everyone who subscribes heard about it on the grapevine," the 30-year-old Virginia Commonwealth University librarian said of the newsletter.

He started the publication on a shoestring, and its growth has not shaken the publishing world.

Not many people have plunked down the \$4 annual subscription fee for the quarterly, which discusses the possible conspiracies involved in the assassinations of President Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

"I guess maybe there are about 75 people who subscribe now," said the short, chunky and shy Burke. "But I'm getting two or three new subscriptions a week."

EVEN IF new people did not buy it, he wouldn't care. He and the associate editor, Ralph Holmes Jr., started publishing the Gazette as a way to discuss publicly the voluminous information they had been reading on the assassinations.

"I was getting so much information in that I needed some outlet to blow steam off about it," he said.

The newsletter's name refers to the place near Dealey Plaza in Dallas, where some critics of the official report on John F. Kennedy's assassination say the fatal shots could have been fired.

That assassination has remained the chief, but not sole, focus of the newsletter.

In the first issue Burke wrote of the purpose of the newsletter: "Who are the murderers of America's leaders — its Presidents, Presidential candidates, and who has forced others still not to run for President? This newsletter will address itself to those questions."

He is not alone at being stirred by the assassinations. His newsletter is just one of four that circulate nationally and overseas to the small, scattered, but vocal individuals who regard official explanations as false.

ONE PRIVATE group, the Assassination Information Bureau, collects every possible scrap of information on the slayings and the possible connections to the CIA, the FBI, major industrialists and the military.

Burke and others keep alive the view that ties exist between all of the assassinations and that powerful forces have covered up the evidence of what happened.

He said he is only so fascinated about his hobby horse. "I keep my tongue in my cheek," he said.

But gathering and publishing scientifically based discussions of the evidence in the shootings is something he takes seriously.

One wall of his Grace Street apartment is crowded with the more than 100 books and documents he has amassed, a collection he has dubbed the "Dorothy Kilgallen Memorial Library."

It is named after the veteran reporter who died under suspicious circumstances after taping an interview with Jack Ruby following the shooting of the alleged assassin of President Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald.

"She is just one of three dozen people who have had some connection with the assassinations who have died under strange circumstances since then," Burke said. "Some place that number as high as 100."

One name that was almost added to the list, Burke said, is that of Larry Flynt, the publisher who survived a sniper attack last month in Lawrenceville, Ga. That shooting occurred only weeks after Flynt had widely advertised that he would pay \$1 million for information leading to the arrest of John F. Kennedy's assassin, Burke noted.

BURKE'S NEWSLETTER features reprints from little noted or not widely circulated publications whose writers send him information.

For example, the last issue featured an article by J. David Truby, an Indiana newspaper columnist, who wrote that Washington sources told him the current and highly expensive investigation of the assassinations by a House of Representatives select committee would end up as a whitewash.

Another article featured an analysis of the medical documents relating to the fatal wounds President Kennedy suffered. And there are reviews of the most recent spate of books on that assassination and others.

Burke said he never really thought a great deal about conspiracies and assassinations when he was younger. And he was not overwhelmed by the slaying of President Kennedy.

But his opposition to the Vietnam war led him to distrust official explanations, he said, and that was only heightened by the Watergate affair.

Suddenly, he said, he began seeing a connection between names appearing during Watergate and those that had appeared around the time of Kennedy's assassination.

"I BEGAN to read everything I could about the assassination," he said.

About 18 months ago he decided to publish the newsletter. Its acceptance went far beyond what he had initially expected.

And if a 14-year-old assassination is something that seems a bit stale for discussion to many people, Burke said he does not fear running out of material to print.

"At first I was somewhat concerned that the (House) committee's report would put people like me out of business, would put an end to the whole thing," he said.

"But considering what that report is likely to say, I don't think that will happen. There is so much material on the subject that I'll have plenty for at least several more years."